

Attachment 1
RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC REQUEST

1. *An explanation of the EPA's scientific justification for the soil sampling plan used in the federal investigation at the Tulane National Primate Research Center, particularly as it pertains to the number of soil samples taken at the site, and whether the agency has sought outside input or consultation about that plan (if so, please provide us with a list of those partners).*

- **Explain the justification for the number of soil samples taken:** EPA was requested to design a sampling plan for the Unified Command's consideration, for Tulane National Primate Research Center (TNPRC) to implement and for CDC to analyze and interpret. The purpose of this plan was to develop an approach to determine if *Burkholderia pseudomallei* (Bp) had been released from primate cages. Following the DHS and EPA's Planning Guidance for Recovery Following Biological Incidents and the joint CDC, DHS and EPA's interim final Reference Guide for Developing and Executing *Bacillus anthracis* Sampling Plans in Indoor Settings, EPA used known site factors like the source location and potential release direction to determine the sample locations and optimize the possibility of detecting Bp during the February sampling effort. EPA also included sampling protocols for TNPRC to follow during the implementation of the sampling plan. Attachment 2 is a copy of the sampling plan. During implementation, at the request of CDC, the plan was adjusted in the field to add sampling locations on the north campus.
- **Did EPA seek outside consultation on the sampling plan?** EPA briefed the Unified Command and included all input received in the sampling plan. Unified Command included: St Tammy Parish, GOHSEP, Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals and CDC. In addition, EPA also consulted with the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality, Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry, USDA, and EPA Office of Research and Development's National Homeland Security Research Center for input on the sampling strategy, sampling procedures, and decontamination options.

2. *A description of the procedure and specific equipment used by the EPA for air sampling pursuant to this investigation.*

The Portable Sampling Units (PSUs) utilized at the Tulane National Primate Research Center (TNPRC) were units designed and used for the Department of Homeland Security BioWatch program. All air samples were collected utilizing PSUs. Three PSUs were used in the air sampling conducted at TNPRC. They were initially deployed throughout the South Campus in the following areas around the non-human primate enclosures; 1) The fence line nearest the Northlake Christian School, 2) Near the sewage aeration pond and 3) Near the gravel filter. The PSU's were activated on Sunday February 8th and collected data on a 24 hour basis until Thursday February 12th. The samples were sent to CDC for analysis and interpretation. CDC found that all twelve of the samples collected from the 4 days of sampling were negative for the presence of Bp or any other biological agents.

Additional details are included in the Quality Assurance Sampling Plan for Tulane University National Primate Research Center date February 2015 Section 3 Response Activities. (See Attachment 2)

3. ***A copy of the State of Louisiana's letter to the EPA requesting assistance in testing soil for B. pseudomallei.***

See attached files

- Copy of January 31, 2015, email request from GOHSEP requesting EPA staff to assist (Attachment 3)
- 2/20 letter to EPA from GOHSEP (Attachment 4)
- 3/13 letter to EPA from GOHSEP (Attachment 5)

4. ***A delineation of responsibilities among federal agencies for soil and air sampling in the wake of this and other events involving potential bioterrorism agents or infectious diseases.***

Under the Biological Incident Annex to the National Response Framework, the coordinating agency is the Department of Health and Human Services which includes CDC. Under this annex, EPA is considered a cooperating agency. In the TNPRC event, EPA fulfilled this role when on January 27, 2015, CDC asked EPA to provide technical assistance on how to sample air, soil and water and methods to decontaminate soil in the non-human primate enclosures that could be implemented on an emergency basis. EPA then drafted and presented a plan to the Unified Command which included the St Tammany Parish, Louisiana Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (GOHSEP), Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals (LDHH) and CDC on February 6, 2015. The Unified Command approved the sampling plan and EPA initiated air sampling on February 8, 2015, and TNPRC initiated soil and water sampling on February 9, 2015. TNPRC shipped all of the samples (air, soil, and water) to CDC for analysis and interpretation. On March 13, 2015, CDC announced that there was no evidence at that time to suggest the organism was released into the surrounding environment and it was unlikely there was any threat to the general population.

EPA has authority under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), Pursuant to CERCLA, disease causing agents are considered pollutants or contaminants and EPA may take action to contain or mitigate a threatened or actual release. In addition, under the National Response Framework, Emergency Support Function (ESF) #10, EPA is the ESF coordinator for Oil and Hazardous Material Response which includes chemical, biological and radiological substances, whether accidentally or intentionally released. The Homeland Security Presidential Directive #10 directs EPA to, among other items, develop "specific standards, protocols, capabilities to address the risks of contamination following a biological weapons attack and develop strategies, guidelines, and plans for decontamination of persons, equipment, and facilities."